

13 May 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Press Request for Personal Statement on  
Ambassador Veljko Micunovic

1. A Mr. Gustincic, Washington correspondent of the Belgrade newspaper Politika telephoned today to say that Ambassador Veljko Micunovic is critically ill in Belgrade and not expected to live. He had been asked to obtain personal statements from prominent Americans who had known Micunovic for a memorial edition Politika plans. These statements would, of course, be used only in the event of Ambassador Micunovic's passing.

2. I do not know Mr. Gustincic nor had I heard from him previously. I said I was sorry to have this news, thanked him for calling, and added that I would like to sort out my recollections of the Ambassador. Gustincic promised to call later in the day.

3. (Note: Micunovic was Ambassador to the United States from 1962 to 1966. He was Ambassador to the Soviet Union twice, the latter period coinciding with my service in Belgrade as US Ambassador, 1969-1972. He has since served on the Federal Executive Council and the Council of the Federation, and recently published his memoirs centering on Yugoslavian-Soviet relations. I met him in Yugoslavia in 1946 during my first tour there; knew him in Washington as Yugoslav Ambassador; and saw him infrequently but regularly during my second Belgrade tour as he generally called whenever he returned on leave or consultations from Moscow.)

4. I spoke with [redacted], DD/NFAC, and with [redacted] Public Affairs Office, and confirmed there would be no objection from the Agency or NFAC to my making the

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requested statement. At [ ] suggestion, I also checked with State and spoke with Peter Bridges, Director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs. Bridges said the Department saw no reason why I should not respond affirmatively to Gustincic.

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5. When Gustincic called back I dictated to him the statement which follows, with his expressed agreement that Politika might excerpt but would not change its text:

"I knew Ambassador Micunovic for more than thirty-five years. I esteemed him as a colleague and shall miss him as a friend. He was a true professional whose extraordinary qualities of intellect, courage, personal warmth, and broad culture marked his long and distinguished career. He was an admirable and fearless representative of his country. He will be greatly mourned by his many friends in the United States."

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[ ]  
William Leonhart

cc: [ ] DD/NFAC  
Public Affairs

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